

POST DEPLOYMENT CONNECTION

for Returning VISN 16 Vets

We're here
for you.

A publication of VA South Central MIRECC

Winter 2008

OEF/OIF Health Benefits

Every VA Medical Center has a team standing ready to welcome OEF/OIF service members and help coordinate their care.

Why register with the VA?

Medical and Mental Health Benefits

Veterans, including activated Reservists and members of the National Guard, are eligible for VA care if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions. Health benefits include cost-free VA health care and medications provided for conditions potentially related to combat service for 5 years after discharge. VA provides general and specialized health care services to meet the unique needs of veterans returning from combat deployments. You get access not only to health care but also to vocational help, family counseling, contact with vet support groups, and other medical or mental health support when you need it.

Dental Benefits

Veterans who served on active duty 90 days or more are eligible to receive one-time VA dental benefits if they make an application to VA within

180 days post discharge from active duty and if their discharge form (DD Form 214) does not indicate necessary dental treatment had been provided within 90 days of release from active duty.

Why a mental health appointment?

We know that duty in a combat zone can be very stressful and sometimes the effects of that stress carry over into civilian life. Some veterans are aware themselves of having adjustment issues; others hear about it from those close to them. Whether it is difficulties with transitioning home or over using substances, like alcohol, to numb the distress, we want to provide you with a safe, confidential setting where you can talk about any of these kinds of issues and get help for them if you need it.

What can I expect at my mental health appointment?

You can expect a comprehensive interview by a mental health professional who has been specially trained about the issues facing newly returning veterans. You can expect to be listened to in a caring, respectful way. You can expect clear information about whether your problems are expectable, temporary ones or whether they are more complicated. You can expect a definite plan to get you the help that you need.



VISN 16 OEF/OIF Coordinators

www.va.gov/scmirecc/page.cfm?pg=71

VISN 16 Lead Program Manager

Marilyn Crosby, RN
601-364-7912

Alexandria, LA

Tara Bordelon
318-473-0010 x2799

Central Arkansas -Little Rock

Nakia Williams
501-257-6748

Fayetteville, AR

Lisa Watroba-Brown
479-443-4301, ext 5762

Gulf Coast Veterans HCS (Biloxi)

Larry S. Parker
228-523-4787

Post Deployment Connection Houston, TX

Toni Brown
713-794-7928

Jackson, MS

Beverly Wall
601-362-4471 x5710

Muskogee, OK

Nanette Waller
918-577-4150

New Orleans, LA VAMC

Leigh Hanhart
504-274-6566

Oklahoma City, OK VAMC

Edwina Luker
405-270-0501 x3214

Shreveport, LA VAMC

Loreta Leavitt
318-221-8411 x7229/7057



OEF/OIF

Workplace Programs for Substance Abuse Benefit Everyone

Nearly 75 percent of all adult illicit drug users are employed, as are most binge and heavy alcohol users. Studies show that when compared with non-substance abusers, substance-abusing employees are more likely to:

- change jobs frequently
- be late to or absent from work
- be less productive employees
- be involved in a workplace accident
- file a workers' compensation claim.

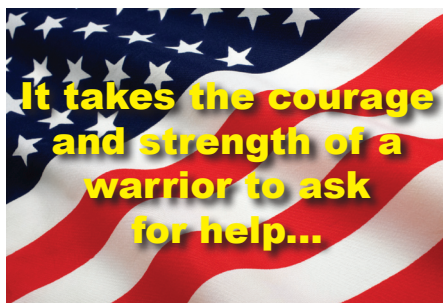
Employers who have implemented drug-free workplace programs have important experiences to share.

- Employers with successful drug-free workplace programs report improvements in morale and productivity, and decreases in absenteeism, accidents, downtime, turnover, and theft.
- Employers with longstanding programs report better health status among employees and family members.

For more information, visit the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Division of Workplace Programs Website at <http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov>.

Suicide Prevention Hotline Stands Poised to Help

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has established a partnership with the Suicide Prevention Lifeline Organization to ensure veterans in emotional crisis have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. Veterans can call the Lifeline number, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), and press "1" to be routed to the Veterans Hotline.



**Call 1-800-273-TALK
Press 1 for Veterans**

What are the Warning Signs for Suicide?

Seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK if you or someone you know exhibits any of the following signs:

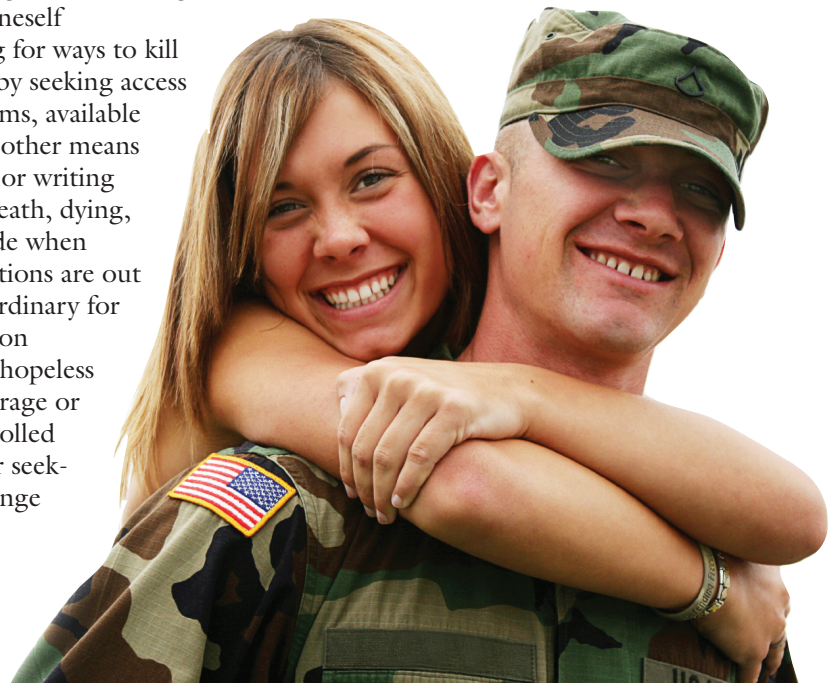
- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger or seeking revenge

- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities—seemingly without thinking
- Feeling trapped—like there's no way out
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and society
- Feeling anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Experiencing dramatic mood changes
- Seeing no reason for living or having no sense of purpose in life

Veteran specific factors that may increase risk

- Frequent deployments
- Deployments to hostile environments
- Exposure to extreme stress
- Physical/sexual assault while in the service (not limited to women)
- Length of deployments
- Service related injury

You don't have to be in crisis to call. We are here for you and have information about support services that can help you regardless of what you are going through!





Resources for Family, Friends and Teachers

Parents need to communicate with children about deployment and reintegration in ways that are developmentally appropriate. Here are some resources for children and parents that can use to discuss these important topics.

VA KIDS: Visit the VA Kids

Website at <http://www.va.gov/kids/> for information and resources for children, teens, and teachers. For K-5th graders. Resources are available that provide cool facts about who veterans are and what's special about veteran's day. Online interactive games and activities promote learning about veterans. For 6th-12th graders: Website complete with background information the VA, including services and benefits provided. Additional information covers volunteerism and scholarship opportunities through the VA. Teachers' Page. The Teacher's page at VA kids provides information for all grade levels and includes information on volunteerism and scholarship through the VA.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

SESAME STREET:

talk, listen, connect:

Deployments,

homecomings, changes:

In recognition of the contributions made by the United States Armed Forces, Sesame Street

Workshop developed

an educational outreach initiative designed for military families and their young children to share. This bilingual (English and Spanish) multimedia program provides support to military families with children between the ages of two and five who are experiencing deployment, multiple deployments, or a parent's return home changed due to a combat-related injury. Watch videos and download materials at <http://archive.sesameworkshop.org/tlc/>.



Don't miss it!

My HealtheVet is a web-based product that gives veterans information and tools to improve their health. Registration is required to have full access to all features and will allow you to

- Add information to a personal health journal about over-the-counter medications, allergies, military health history, medical events, tests and allergies.
- Record and track personal information such as contact information, emergency contacts, health care providers, and health insurance information.
- Record and track personal health measurements (blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, heart rate, body temperature, weight, and pain) in Vitals & Readings.
- Print a wallet ID card with the personal information entered into the personal health record.



With My HealtheVet you are able to:

- Gain a better understanding of your health status
- Explore a variety of options to improve your health
- Learn to use the available tools to become partners with your caregivers in understanding and managing your personal health care
- Easily access medical information from anywhere in the world with Internet access
- Select your favorite links and make your own special health web pages

You need a computer with Internet access at home or through public access like a library or Internet café. Computers are also available for use at your local VA Medical Center. You can also use computers provided for My HealtheVet access at your local VA Medical Center.

No formal training is needed to use My HealtheVet. My HealtheVet was created with the veteran and doctor in mind.

Returning from War

Check out Afterdeployment.org a new wellness resource site developed by DoD and VA Service Members, Veterans, and Military Families. If you've deployed, or know someone who has, you know that spending time in a war zone means being changed in some way. Some of these changes are good. But some of these changes may be causing problems for you or for someone you know. Having problems after a deployment is normal.



Post Deployment Connection for Returning VISN 16 Vets

Where are the forms I need to apply for medical benefits?

**You may apply for medical benefits at the VA's
website: <http://vaww.va.gov/vaforms/>**

After completing the application, VA Form 10-10EZ, please mail or fax directly to us with the member 4 copy of your DD214. Physical address, e-mail address, and fax numbers of the OEF/OIF team in your area can be found on the web at <http://www1.va.gov/scmirecc/page>. Once the OEF/OIF team receives your forms, we will contact you to schedule appointments on a date and time which is most convenient for you. If you have any questions, please contact us.

You may obtain a copy of your DD214 from this website: <http://www.archives.gov/research/index.html>.

If you need to apply for non-medical benefits, such as disability, compensation, vocational rehab, GI bill, home loan, etc., please call the Veterans Benefit Administration at 1-800-827-1000. You may not apply for these benefits with the VA Form 10-10EZ.

We look forward to serving your health care needs.



This project was supported by a grant from the
VA South Central (VISN 16) Mental Illness
Research, Education, and Clinical Center.